

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 AF-08 ISO-00 NEAE-00 INRE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00

CCO-00 CIAE-00 DOTE-00 EB-07 H-02 INR-07 IO-13 L-03

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USSS-00 SY-05 WRD-01 SCCT-01 EA-07 EUR-12 SCS-03

SCA-01 PPT-01 VO-03 INSE-00 /114 W

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O R 241423Z AUG 76

FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6357

INFO AMCONSUL ALEXANDRIA

AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN

FAA WASHDC

DIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L CAIRO 11367

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINS, EG

SUBJECT: EGYPT AIR HIJACKING

REF: CAIRO 11321

1. DESPITE STRENOUS EFFORTS, WE HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO LOCATE ANY OF AMERICANS BELIEVED ON HIJACKED PLANE IN ORDER TO OBTAIN FIRST-HAND ACCOUNT. EXXON CAIRO EMPLOYEE DON MURRAY AND HIS WIFE HAVE NOT RETURNED HOME NOR REPORTED TO HIS OFFICE. A MR. AND MRS. GREENE ARE REGISTERED AT HILTON BUT ARE NOT IN THEIR ROOM AND WE ARE NOT CERTAIN THEY ARE SAME COUPLE THAT WAS ON
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AIRCRAFT. THOMAS QUINN IS NO LONGER REGISTERED AT SHERATON

NOR HAVE WE BEEN ABLE TO LOCATE HIM ELSEWHERE. WE HAVE NOT YET CONFIRMED NAMES OF TWO OTHER POSSIBLE AMERICANS. WE WILL CONTINUE OUR EFFORTS IN ORDER TO EXPRESS TO AMERICANS OUR RELIEF AT THEIR ESCAPE FROM HARM AND REVIEW EFFORTS EMBASSY TOOK DURING HIJACKING.

2. WE HAVE OBTAINED FROM AUSTRALIAN CHARGE FOLLOWING FIRST-HAND ACCOUNT FROM AUSTRALIAN PASSENGER IN MID 50'S WHO APPEARED TO BE GOOD OBSERVER: THREE TERRORISTS, WHOM HE DESCRIBED AS "YOUNG HOODLUMS," SPOKE ONLY ARABIC. THEY WERE QUITE COOL THROUGHOUT. THEY HAD BROUGHT ON TO THE PLANE A LARGE LEATHER BAG WHICH THEY PLACED IN THE MID-SECTION OF PLANE AND SAID CONTAINED EXPLOSIVES AND WERE ARMED WITH "SUBMARINE GUNS." THERE HAD BEEN NO SECURITY CHECK OF PASSENGERS OR OF HAND LUGGAGE WHILE BOARDING AT CAIRO DOMESTIC TERMINAL. THEY HAD TREATED THE PASSENGERS WELL WITH EXCEPTION OF ONE AMERICAN WHO WAS ROUGHED UP A BIT WHEN HE SEEN PUTTING SOMETHING IN HIS POCKET.

3. AUSTRALIAN SAID TOTAL TIME SPENT ON PLANE WAS TEN HOURS. PRIOR TO SHOOT OUT, ALL PASSENGERS EXCEPT EUROPEANS AND ORIENTALS HAD BEEN PERMITTED TO DISEMBARK, LEAVING APPROXIMATELY 60 PEOPLE ON BOARD. MILITARY OPERATION BEGAN WHEN THREE EGYPTIANS, DRESSED AS MECHANICS, ENTERED THE PLANE. SIGNAL FOR THE TAKE OVER CAME WHEN ONE OF THE HIJACKERS AT THE TOP OF THE STEPS AT FRONT OF PLANE WAS SHOT REPEATEDLY BY GROUP OF COMMANDOS OUTSIDE. AT SAME TIME, THE "MECHANICS" ATTACKED THE SECOND HIJACKER IN THE FIRST-CLASS COMPARTMENT WITH SCREWDRIVERS AND OTHER TOOLS, SEVERELY INJURING HIM. THERE WAS THEN A LULL IN THE SHOOTING AS ALL PASSENGERS WERE TOLD TO GET OUT OF THE PLANE, WHICH THEY DID UNHARMED. THEY STEPPED OVER WHAT AUSTRALIAN THOUGHT WAS DEAD BODY OF THE FIRST HIJACKER AT BOTTOM OF THE RAMP. AFTER PASSENGERS HAD DISEMBARKED, INDISCRIMINATE SHOOTING RESUMED, SUPPOSITION BEING THAT THIRD HIJACKER HAD TAKEN REFUGE IN THE BACK OF PLANE. MOST, BUT NOT ALL, OF PASSENGERS WERE FLOWN BACK TO CAIRO LAST NIGHT.

4. VIA CORRESPONDENT ATTENDED PRESS CONFERENCE HELD BY BRIG. NABIL SHUKRY, CHIEF OF SPECIAL FORCES AND WELL-KNOWN CONFIDENTIAL

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OCTOBER WAR HERO, AT 1130 THIS MORNING. CONFERENCE WAS ATTENDED BY OVER 100 JOURNALISTS AND 18 SPECIAL FORCES TROOPS IN UNIFORM. THREE HIJACKERS WERE NOT PRESENT AS PROMISED AND SHUKRY SAID THEIR CONDITION DID NOT PERMIT IT (TWO WERE SERIOUSLY WOUNDED AND ONE NOT SERIOUSLY), AND ANOTHER PRESS CONFERENCE WOULD BE HELD WHEN THEY HAD RECUPERATED. SHUKRY THEN GAVE DETAILED ACCOUNT WITH DIAGRAMS OF SPECIAL FORCES OPERATION. OPERATION CONSISTED OF THREE STAGES. DURING FIRST STAGE,

THREE OFFICERS DISGUISED AS MECHANICS ENTERED THE PLANE AND SUCCESSFULLY ENTRAPPED TWO OF THREE HIJACKERS. IN SECOND STAGE, SEVEN OFFICERS AND NCOS RESHED THE PLANE AND SHOT SAME TWO HIJACKERS. THIRD STAGE WAS DIRECTED AT THIRD HIJACKER WHO HAD TAKEN REFUGE IN REAR OF PLANE. SHUKRY SAID HIJACKERS HAD TWO PISTOLS, DAGGERS AND A BAG OF EXPLOSIVES. JOURNALISTS ADDRESSED NUMEROUS QUESTIONS TO SHUKRY ABOUT IDENTITY OF HIJACKERS, SECURITY MEASURES AT AIRPORT AND INVOLVEMENT OF PALESTINIANS OR LIBYANS. SHUKRY REFUSED TO ANSWER ALL QUESTIONS UNRELATED TO THE ACTUAL SPECIAL FORCES OPERATION, SAYING THAT THEY WERE NOT WITHIN HIS COMPETENCE AND HAD TO BE DIRECTED TO THE RESPONSIBLE MINISTRY.

5. CAIRO VOICE OF THE ARABS AT 1330 BROADCAST FOLLOWING "STATEMENT" MADE BY BRIG. SHUKRY AT PRESS CONFERENCE: "PRESS CONFERENCE WAS HELD AT TECHNICAL MILITARY COLLEGE AND ATTENDED BY BRIG. NABIL SHUKRY AND THE HEROES WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE RESCUE. BRIG. SHUKRY STARTED THE CONFERENCE BY EXPRESSING THANKS TO PRESIDENT SADAT SAYING THAT PRESIDENT SADAT'S APPRECIATION OF THE SPECIAL FORCES CONTRIBUTED TO RAISING ITS MORALE. HE FURTHER SAID THAT WE PLEDGE TO ADHERE TO THE MOTTO OF THE SPECIAL FORCES, NAMELY SACRIFICE. HE ALSO SAID THAT THE PRESENCE OF THE PRIMIN AND MINWAR HAD AN IMPORTANT EFFECT IN RAISING MORALE OF TROOPS WHO CARRIED OUT OPERATION COURAGEOUSLY AND IN THE SPIRIT OF OCTOBER WAR. HE FURTHER SAID THAT SUCCESS OF THIS OPERATION UNDERMINED THE SCHEME OF SABOTEURS, NAMELY IMPOSING THEIR CONDITIONS ON EGYPT. BRIG. SHUKRY SAID THAT THEIR OPERATION WAS 100 PERCENT SUCCESSFUL AND DID NOT LEAD TO ANY MATERIAL DAMAGE AND NO PASSENGERS WERE INJURED. HE ALSO SAID THAT THE SUCCESS OF THIS OPERATIONS IS PROOF OF THE CONTINUATION OF THE OCTOBER WAR SPIRIT AND THAT THE EGYPTIAN FIGHTER IS READY TO DEFEND IS COUNTRY. SPECIAL FORCES COULD HAVE ENDED THE OPERATION

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SOONER BY STORMING THE PLANE BUT THEY PREFERRED TO TAKE THEIR TIME TO GUARANTEE THE SAFETY OF PASSENGERS. HE SAID THAT THE OPERATION TOOK TEN MINUTES. HE ALSO PRAISED THE HELP GIVEN TO THEM BY THE AIR BASE IN LUXOR.

5. COMMENT: DETAILS OF OPERATION GIVEN BY SHUKRY, WHICH ARE IN GENERAL CONSISTENT WITH AUSTRALIAN FIRST-HAND ACCOUNT, SHOULD SERVE TO END SPECULATION THAT HIJACKING WAS NOT REAL THING. FOR EXAMPLE, SOVIET FIRST SECRETARY KOLESNIKOV TOLD POLCOUNS AUGUST 24 THAT HE WAS VERY CONCERNED OVER POSSIBLE EGYPTIAN MOVES AGAINST LIBYA AND WONDERED IF HIJACKING WAS NOT STAGED IN ORDER TO PROVIDE PRETEXT FOR GOE ACTION. WE HAVE JUST RECEIVED ACCOUNT OF OPERATION FROM MG FUAD FERID, WHICH HAS SOME SLIGHT VARIATIONS ON ABOVE AND IMPLICATES LIBYA IN HI-JACKING. FERID'S ACCOUNT WILL BE SENT BY SEPTTEL.

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